

**A BRIEF
HISTORY OF
THE NORTH CAROLINA
CHRISTIAN
CONFERENCE**

1866 — 1968

BY J. P. MANGRUM

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In order to give a brief history of the North Carolina Christian Conference, it is necessary to give the background of the organization of the Christian Church. James O'Kelley was the outstanding figure in founding and the organization of the Christian denomination. He was formerly a Methodist, but became dissatisfied with the dictatorship of the Methodist under the leadership of Bishop Asbury, withdrew and carried a large number with him. O'Kelley organized a more liberal Church and called it "Republican Methodist". But within a year the Republican Methodist dissolved their organization on a broader principle—"The Christian Church."

The birth date and place of James O'Kelley are uncertain. Some claim that he was born in Virginia, other in North Carolina, and still others in Old Ireland. His birth must have been about 1735, for he died in 1826, in his ninety-second year.

Rice Haggard, a rather obscure character as far as status is concerned, was a strong supporter of O'Kelley, probably passed his early life in Norfolk County, Virginia. When there was difficulty in forming a name and constitution for the Church, Haggard was ready with the suggestion that henceforth the followers of Christ call themselves "Christians" to the exclusion of all party names. Hence, the Christian denomination was born.

As for the Negro, it was three quarters of a century before he came into the picture.

The new movement passed through a decade of sporadic growth. It was a movement that sprang up in most out-of-the-way places, and was tremendously popular among common people. The preaching was powerfully emotional and thoroughly spontaneous. A single text book, the Bible, provided preachers with their stock and trade. Some ministers were ordained to be traveling evangelists while others were to be pastors.

The early churches were loosely organized for 25 years after James O'Kelley pulled out from the Methodist. They had no business nor rules to govern the organization. Ever since 1808 conference elders served them a year; but as no business was attempted, no organization was needed.

In 1816 the whole brotherhood was greatly embarrassed by the announcement of the soul of the new movement, Elias Smith, through his Herald of Gospel Liberty, that he had espoused the Universalist faith. This incident reminded the elders that they should organize the church so that they may not be scattered among other faiths.

In the General Convention of the Christian Church in its session

of 1850, a resolution was offered declaring the Fugitive Slave Law contrary to Biblical teaching, and demanding repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Then Rev. W. B. Wellons arose, declaring that his further participation in the convention seemed undesired, and that he would withdraw on behalf of his constituency. He left the room and others with him. Debate was shut off by the presiding officer, the motion put, and the majority report carried. Thus the denomination was split, North and South, and each section went its own way for nearly forty years. A considerable portion of the Convention members felt that that action had been too hasty, and that language used in the resolution and debate were needlessly severe; but that the moral issue itself demanded positive action against slavery.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

The Conference was organized in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1866, according to "History of the Christian Denomination in America" by Milo True Morrill, M.A., D.D. This was, perhaps, says the writer, the first conference of any denomination composed wholly of colored persons organized in the South after the Civil War and the emancipation of the colored race. Rev. W. B. Wellons, President of the General Christian Convention, and Rev. H. Hayes, and Rev. J. W. Wellons were present to aid in the organization of the Conference. Rev. William Hayes was the first president.

Following the Civil War churches began to be formed according to the policy and usage of the Christian denomination for colored people in the South. Their early records are mostly gone, but a few facts have been preserved.

In 1873 the Eastern Virginia Colored Christian Conference was organized. Rev. Justin Copeland, President. In 1888, the Eastern Atlantic Christian Conference of North Carolina was formed. A year later the Western Conference (North Carolina Conference) reported 23 ministers and about thirty-five churches, eight churches having also been dismissed to the Eastern Conference. In November, 1875, Rev. William Hazel was appointed to organize a Colored Christian Conference in Tennessee. Further record is lacking. There was a Georgia and Alabama Conference formed in 1887, which went out of existence. The latest conference formed is the Lincoln Conference in North Carolina, formed by a division of the North Carolina in 1910.

THE IDEA OF AN EDUCATION INSTITUTION

In the session of the North Carolina Conference which was held at Burchett's Chapel, Warren County, N. C. on the 9, 10 and 11 of No-

vember, 1871, the idea of establishing a high school at Franklinton, N. C. was discussed at length, Norfleet White, S. L. Long and Wm. M. Hayes were appointed to purchase a lot and take steps, at once, for the establishment of such a school. Two hundred and fifty-four dollars were raised at once for the school.

The next session of the Conference was held at Graham, N. C. No record of this session is available. However, there is a record available for the conference held at Children's Chapel in 1884. The Rev. Moses Fike was President.

The following ministers answered the roll-call: ELDERS—Moses Fike, G. W. Dunn, Joseph Mann, Robert McKenzie, Brutus Young, Tom Bullock, Robert Pretty, T. Black, Jos. F. Mitchell, R. Mangum, William Hayes, F. Sutton, R. D. Johnson, G. W. Duke, and E. Horton.

LICENTIATES: J. T. Levister, M. McKenzie, E. Bullock and S. S. Sanders.

DELEGATES: Raleigh, Henrietta Turner; Franklinton, S. L. Long; New Bethel (Wake), J. P. Dunn; Holly Spring, Edmond Alston; Pleasant Grove, A. Tabron; Rock Spring, E. Allen; White's Grove, W. H. Carrall; Burchett's Chapel, A. C. Edwards; Popes Chapel, W. Williams; Pilgrim's Rest, no delegate; Zion Hill, Charlie Mason; Children's Chapel, David Hunter and Henry Watson; Tabernacle, no delegate; Union Chapel, J. H. Turner; Maple Grove, no delegate; St. Paul, no delegate; Walnut Grove, no delegate; St. Andrew's Chapel, no delegate; Sand Hill, no delegate; Mt. Olives, no delegate; Mt. Zion, no delegate; O'Kelley's Chapel Isaac O'Kelley; Oak Level, no delegate; Kinches Chapel, L. W. Jones; Roanoke Chapel, R. A. Giggitta; Swift Creek, S. Ruffin; Green Level, C. F. McCallum; Jerusalem, S. Coleman; Cedar Grove, J. W. Jenkins; Christian Antioch, T. Slaughter; Beech Grove, no delegate; Pleasant Union, H. Alston and John Allen; Rocky Branch, R. Hinnant and A. Williams; Hanks Chapel, no delegate; Mt. Pisgah (Columbus Co.), no delegate; St. Lewis, no delegate; Zion Hill, no delegate; Young's Chapel, no delegate; Broad Creek Chapel, no delegate; New Hill, Thomas Wilson; Union Chapel, no delegate; New Bethel, no delegate; St. Antioch no delegate; Roberson Chapel, no delegate; Green Level, no delegate; Popular Spring, G. R. Riddick; Christian Chapel, John Horton and W. M. Williams; St. Peter's Chapel, no delegate; Baker's Chapel, no delegate; Antioch (Col. Co.), no delegate; Robertson Chapel, no delegate; Brooklyn Chapel, no delegate; St. Delight, T. B. Clifton; Hickory Grove, Daniel Jones and James Holloway.

SOME HIGH LIGHTS OF THE 1884 CONFERENCE

Rev. G. W. Dunn elected President

Rev. T. J. Levister elected Asst. Secretary

Rev. R. McKenzie preached the first day - Collection \$1.74
 Rev. T. Bullock preached the second day - Collection 2.60
 Rev. J. H. Mabrey preached the third day - Collection 1.55
 Rev. Geo. Young preached the fourth day - Collection96
 Rev. Brutus Young preached the fifth day - Collection None
 Rev. G. W. Dunn preached the sixth day - Collection 5.49
 Reports given on the seventh day - collection -

On motion the names of six ministers were dropped from the ministerial directory. No reasons are given in the minutes. A total of 50 members were expelled from the churches of the Conference during the conference year. Kinches Chapel led all churches with 7 expulsion. If any reasons were reported to the Conference for the expulsions, no record was made in the conference minutes.

MINISTERIAL REPORTS FOR 1884

Dear Brethren: I had Oak Level (Warren Co.). I preached monthly, fifteen converts, eight accessions, united in matrimony fifteen couples, preached thirty-five funerals. — R. D. Johnson.

Dear Brethren: I had no charge this year, but I have preached several times at Durham and other places. — Moses Hester.

Dear Brethren: I had charge of St. Peter's and Pilgrim Rest, 13 accessions to the churches, preached 80 sermons and ordained 3 deacons — J. H. Mabrey

Dear Brethren: I am sorry that I can't meet you, expenses very heavy. I had charge of Christ Hope and Cedar Hill Chapel, three accessions, baptized three, married one couple. Pray for me. — J. Onslow.

Brethren: I am very anxious to be with you, but can't. May success crown your efforts in the work of the Lord. — B. Sutton.

Dear Brethren: I had four churches in charge, had 47 accessions, baptized 39, married one couple, preached 10 funerals, built one house of worship. The Lord has blessed me. Pray that I may hold out. — R. Mangum.

Dear Brethren: I have been sick a great deal. I had one charge, preached twice a month, baptized 13, preached 48 sermons and 2 funeral sermons. — Jos. Adams.

Dear Brethren: I had in charge Holly Spring all the year. I had Rocky Spring 4 months and filled Elder Dunn's appointments for six weeks at Cary. At Holly Spring we had eleven converts and 8 accessions. — No name recorded.

EXCERPTS FROM MINUTES OF THE 1895

HELD AT BURLINGTON, NOV. 13-16

Officers:

Wm. Williams, President Raleigh, N. C.
H. E. Long, Secretary Franklinton, N. C.
James A. Henderson, Asst. Secretary . . . Middleburg, N. C.
H. K. Kearney, Treasurer Franklinton, N. C.

MINISTERS, ELDERS AND POST OFFICES

G. W. Dunn Graham, N. C.
Robert Pretty Harpboro, N. C.
T. J. Levister Greensboro, N. C.
R. D. Johnson Apex, N. C.
B. W. Williams Burlington, N. C.
Brutus Young Middleburg, N. C.
C. W. Ray Stainback, N. C.
Jacob Onslow Wilmington, N. C.
I. Boyd Cary, N. C.
Samuel Goode Aberdeen, N. C.
Jerry Petty Unknown
Jas. McBrown Haw River, N. C.
H. S. Alston Epsom, N. C.
A. A. Jones Unknown
William Allen Bangor, N. C.
W. H. Dugger Oxford, N. C.
J. W. Ray Franklinton, N. C.
T. Bullock Manson, N. C.
R. T. Whitaker Raleigh, N. C.
E. Bullock Middleburg, N. C.
J. H. Mabry Cary, N. C.
J. A. Ash Franklinton, N. C.
M. M. Hester Durham, N. C.
E. S. Reid Woolworth, N. C.
Thos. Brown Cary, N. C.
A. Leggon Raleigh, N. C.
R. K. Kearney Franklinton, N. C.
H. B. Boylin Apex, N. C.
John Allen Mt. Energy, N. C.
W. H. Horton Boyett, N. C.
John Kent Holly Springs, N. C.
H. E. Long Franklinton, N. C.
William Williams Raleigh, N. C.
Wm. McCoy Raleigh, N. C.

LICENTIATE MINISTERS

L. A. Ruffin	Raleigh, N. C.
P. R. Alexander	Palmer Springs, Va.
H. S. Baskerville	Manson, N. C.
M. D. Harden	Graham, N. C.
J. J. Jiggetts	Palmer Springs, Va.
Sympson Whitaker	Raleigh, N. C.
D. Arrington	Graham, N. C.
S. W. Albright	Haw River, N. C.
A. J. Holoway	Manson, N. C.
William Mayo	Unknown
Wm. Marsh	Senhirst, N. C.
B. W. Williams	McCray's Store, N. C.
Allen Smith	Unknown
D. D. Bullock	Unknown
S. Colman	Palmer Springs, Va.
R. Green	Raleigh, N. C.
Geo. Smith	New Hill, N. C.

Amount of money raised in their conference	\$312.66
Total amount paid out	269.66
The average contribution per church.	4.40
There were 71 churches reporting	
Largest amount paid out - Christian College	75.00
Contribution to Maple Temple	
for ceiling and repairs	47.00
Greensboro Mission	20.00

SOME RESOLUTIONS PASSED

Whereas, seeing the great need of more finance in the treasury of the North Carolina Christian Conference, therefore, be it

Resolved that each minister shall carry up to Conference three fourths or more of his conference assessment (according to membership), annually from his pastorage. Or else he shall be called into question for the same - adopted - Very respectfully - James H. McBroom

Resolution in respect to Rev. C. A. Beck, deceased, ex-member of the Board of Control of Franklinton Christian College:

Whereas, Rev. C. A. Beck was for eight years a member of the Board of Control of the Franklinton Christian College, and whereas for one year he was President of the same institution, and whereas by his work in this institution has endeared himself to the N. C. Christian Conference and the brotherhood, and,

Whereas, the Rev. C. A. Beck passed to a better life, September 26, 1895. Therefore, Resolved that the N. C. Conference do in respect to his memory: stand in prayer, led by the oldest member present. Speeches were delivered by many of the brethren in honor of Rev. Beck. Then prayer was offered by Rev. Thomas Bullock.

The above resolutions reveal some of the thinking of the brethren 71 years ago.

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES 1916 CONFERENCE HELD AT MIDDLEBURG

When one scans the minutes of the 1916 Conference, fifty years ago, one is reminded how time does eliminate our brethren. Those of us who are sixty-five or seventy years old, remember many of these Brethern when they were active.

The officers were as follows: President, Rev. J. A. Henderson, Townsville, N. C.; Vice-President, Rev. J. H. Mabry, Durham, N. C.; Secretary, Rev. A. A. Bright, Raleigh, N. C.; Asst. Secretary, Rev. P. R. Alexander, Palmer Spring, Va.; Treasurer, Rev. H. E. Long, Franklinton, N. C.

TRUSTEES

H. E. Long, A. A. Bright, J. A. Henderson, A. J. Holloway, P. R. Alexander

ROLL OF MINISTERS ELDERS

P. R. Alexander	Goode's Ferry, Va.
H. B. Balwin	Apex, N. C.
E. J. Blue	Aberdeen, N. C.
A. A. Bright	Raleigh, N. C.
G. S. Boyd	Townsville, N. C.
W. H. Dugger	Durham, N. C.
J. R. Eaton	Louisburg, N. C.
L. D. C. Goodson	Clayton, N. C.
A. J. Holloway	Henderson, N. C.
T. H. Hawkins	Cary, N. C.
C. A. Harris	Norfolk, Va.
T. H. Jones	Ridgeway, N. C.
H. E. Long	Franklinton, N. C.
W. M. McClean	Asberry, N. C.
J. E. Person	Townsville, N. C.

W. H. Phillips Holly Spring, N. C.
 H. Russell Norlina, N. C.
 C. A. Strouds Raleigh, N. C.
 W. J. Upchurch Method, N. C.
 B. J. Williams McCullers, N. C.
 W. M. Allen Cary, N. C.
 R. D. Bullock Manson, N. C.
 H. S. Baskerville Henderson, N. C.
 J. H. Brown Durham, N. C.
 S. Dowd Raleigh, N. C.
 G. W. Drake Ridgeway, N. C.
 I. B. Enoch Durham, N. C.
 J. A. Henderson Townsville, N. C.
 E. D. Hill Raleigh, N. C.
 G. T. Hall Newport News, Va.
 N. E. Higgs Durham, N. C.
 M. A. Jones Raleigh, N. C.
 J. H. Mabry Durham, N. C.
 W. S. Matthews Raleigh, N. C.
 N. H. Page Holly Spring, N. C.
 J. W. Patton Franklinton, N. C.
 C. W. Richardson Wakefield, N. C.
 J. E. Samuels Franklinton, N. C.
 M. L. Watson Raleigh, N. C.

LICENTIATES

B. W. Bullock Manson, N. C.
 C. A. Crump Asberry, N. C.
 L. A. McClendon Durham, N. C.
 A. Shaw Morrisville, N. C.
 William Sneed Rockingham, N. C.
 Wm. Thomas Wilson, N. C.
 Randall Whitley Wilson Mills, N. C.
 H. W. Walker Franklinton, N. C.
 John Clifton Youngsville, N. C.
 L. C. Cross Durham, N. C.
 A. M. McCoy Raleigh, N. C.
 A. J. Smith Garner, N. C.
 J. J. Taylor Raleigh, N. C.
 Josiah Wilder Wilson, N. C.
 C. L. Williams Clayton, N. C.

The following were licensed to preach: W. H. Jeffreys, J. B. Pretty, Charles Kingsburry, W. H. Hinton, J. D. Hill, J. B. Bennett, J. S. Williamson, J. C. Crenshaw, H. Miles, and A. Harper.

SPECIAL SERMONS PREACHED

Educational Dr. J. E. Samuels
Doctrinal Rev. A. J. Holloway
Annual Rev. S. Dowd
Address - Rev. J. A. Henderson - "Well Trained Ministry"

NEW CHURCHES ADMITTED TO CONFERENCE

Cannon St. Mission of Raleigh, N. C., organized by Rev. J. Mann;
Spring Street Church, Wake Forest, N. C. organized by Rev. W. J. Upchurch

The following ministers of the 1916 Conference were also represented in the 1884 Conference: J. H. Mabry and Joseph Mann.

Eulogistic services for Rev. J. A. Alexander and Rev. A. Liggonis conducted by Rev. W. S. Matthews - Text: Rev. 3:25.

REVISED RITUAL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH PREFACE

"The Colored Christians have been needing a Church Ritual, gotten up for their use, that would give them some of the names of the fathers of their Church to which they could refer in after days. This Church has struggled hard for existence against many opposing obstacles but God has given it a better day.

Brethren, take this little book, and in the name of God, go forth and Christianize the world" - Yours for Heaven, A. A. B. B. D."

We should remember that Negroes were not wholly ignorant of worship services before the surrender of the Southern Confederacy, for they had been members of white congregations. After peace had been declared they began to congregate for the purpose of worshipping God. Their white brethren heard of them, and sent Revs. W. B. Wellons and W. M. Hayes to gather the scattered brethren together in a conference. This assembly came together in the City of Raleigh, N. C., November 10, 1867. The following congregations were in the organization: Christian Chapel, Pleasant Grove, Swift Creek Chapel, Pleasant Hill and New Bern.

The following preachers and delegates were present:
Rev. William H. Hayes, Samuel Foy, J. J. Jeffreys. J. J. Jeffreys and W. H. Hayes were ordained and Samuel Foy was licensed. Delegates: John Kent, N. Horton, Barry Hank and Monroe Watson.

This Conference has had a steady increase. It established a school at Franklinton, N. C. in 1880, known as Christian College (although it never attained the level above high school). This school actually originated under another name by Prof. H. E. Long of Franklinton, N. C. in 1878. This school operated until 1930 under the following presidents:

Prof. H. E. Long - 1878	Franklinton, N. C.
Rev. George Young - 1882	New York, N. Y.
Rev. C. A. Beck - 1889	New York, N. Y.
Rev. J. F. Ullery - 1890	Ohio
Rev. N. Del. McReynolds - 1891	Ohio
Rev. Z. A. Poste - 1897	New York, N. Y.
Prof. H. E. Long - 1904	Franklinton, N. C.
Rev. F. S. Hendershot - 1917	Pennsylvania
Rev. S. A. Howell - 1920	Newport News, Va.
Prof. J. A. Henderson- 1922-1930	Townsville, N. C.

This school operated for 52 years, and closed at the end of the school year of 1930. The school served a great purpose during those years when there were no public high schools. There are teachers to-day in active service who received their basic training at Christian College.

The writer entered Christian College January 1, 1912. There were no registration fee, no tuition fee, only \$5.00 per month for board, lodging and laundry. This does not say that every one had plenty to eat, parents shipped boxes of food by express to their children. These boxes were happy expectations from home.

However, those days were great days for forming friendship and lasting memory. At the close of the session and the day came to go home, many tears were shed for many of them lived in distant cities, and could not see each other until the next school term or maybe never. In their preparation for travel, they would put on their arm bands with the initials, "F. C. C." (Franklinton Christian College) that people may know that they had attended this school.

The Christian College was largely supported by the American Christian Convention with the organizations of the Negro church contributing.

ORIGINAL CONFERENCE RULES

1. It is the duty of every church to select a pastor to serve in the holy things, and to preach to them the unsearchable riches of God's grace.

2. The members shall provide for the support of the pastor, and shall

pay their salaries in their monthly meetings, in which all the members are required to be present.

3. No member who shall neglect to pay his or her salary dues for three consecutive meetings is not a member in good standing, and before he or she can be restored to membership he or she must pay up the arrears.

4. The members shall adhere to the decisions of the pastor, who shall ever make his decisions in accordance with the word of God.

5. The members shall meet weekly, and give for the support of the pastor's table, that he may be able to give all his time to the preaching of the Gospel and looking after the needs of his flock. This amount shall not be included in his salary.

These rules may seem a little idealistic, even after the elapse of a hundred years, but we should remember that these rules were handed to the Negro by his white brethren.

THE CHARTER OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

"In order properly to prosecute the objects and purpose set forth in the Charter, the Corporation shall have full power and authority to purchase, release, and otherwise acquire, hold, mortgage, convey, and otherwise dispose of all property, both real and personal, both in this state, and in all other states, territories and dependencies of the United States, and generally to perform all acts which may be deemed necessary for the proper and successful prosecution of objects and purposes for which the Corporation was created."

The records of the sessions of the Conferences were only recorded in the minutes of each annual session. Therefore, when the minutes were discarded, the records were lost.

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE KNOWN PRESIDENTS:

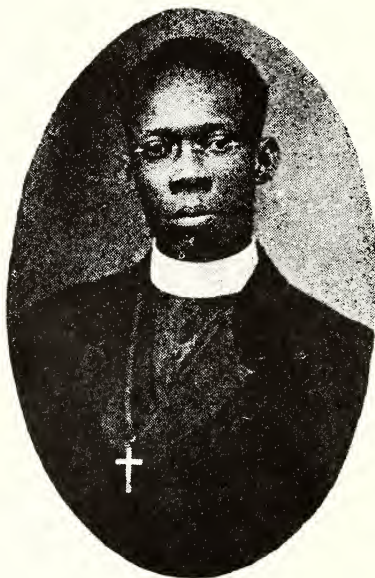
Rev. William M. Hayes (first)1866
Rev. Brutus Young1873
Rev. G. W. Dunn1895
Rev. J. A. Henderson1916-1958-42 years
Rev. W. H. Thomas1958-1962
Rev. J. M. Burwell1962-1965
Rev. C. W. Samuels1965-



REV. J. A. HENDERSON

President of the North Carolina Christian Conference
1916 — 1958

Rev. Prof. J. A. Henderson served as President of the Conference for 42 years. He was assistant secretary of the Conference of 1895, giving 63 years of service to the Conference. He was President of Christian College during the latter part of this period.



REV. J. E. SAMUELS, M. A., B. D.

Secretary of Missions and Education of the Afro-Christian
Convention. President of the North Carolina Sunday
School Convention.

Rev. J. E. Samuels, M.A., B.D. was another outstanding character who gave status and dignity to the Conference in the matter of programming and publicity. He was a highly trained man with a degree from Oxford University, England. He was the father of Rev. C. W. Samuels who is President of the North Carolina Acting Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ.

The United Church of Christ is an integrated Church. Both Negro and white are members of the same organizations. The Southern Conference extends from the middle of Richmond, Va., south of the State, and all of North Carolina. The Southern Conference incorporated the former Southern Convention (white), and the Convention of the South (Negro). The auxiliaries of the former Southern Convention and the Convention of the South have been merged into two associations, namely, North Carolina Eastern Association and North Carolina Western Association.

SUMMARY

The former Christian Church for Negroes was organized in 1866, a year after the close of the Civil War. The union of the Congregational and Christian denominations was completed in 1931. The Congregational Christian Church united with the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1958. The new name for the denomination is "United Church of Christ.

The office of the Southern Conference is located at Burlington, N. C., at 328 West Davis Street.

Dr. James H. Lightbourne, Jr. Conference Minutes.

This brief history of the Conference is not inclusive as I had hoped. But due to the limited information available, this is the best that I could do.

I am indebted to the following persons for information contributed to this article:

Dr. W. T. Scott of Elon College for information on the organization of the North Carolina Christian Church and the Negro Conference.

Rev. W. M. Lake for use of his Thesis: "A Study of the Christian Denomination" Submitted to the faculty of the School of Religion of Shaw University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Bachelor Divinity.

Rev. R. D. Bullock, Jr., for some old minutes of the Conference, and to others who made some contributions.

JOHN P. MANGRUM

